

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 995

CE 049 819

AUTHOR Osborne, Ernest L.
TITLE Innovative Programs To Meet Industry Workforce Needs.
PUB DATE 9 Mar 88
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Conference Board Meeting "Beyond Business Education Partnerships: Aiming at a High Competitiveness Quotient" (New York, NY, March 9, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Basic Skills; *Cooperative Planning; Curriculum Development; *Dropout Prevention; Elementary Secondary Education; Literacy Education; Postsecondary Education; *School Business Relationship; Tutorial Programs; *Work Experience Programs; *Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Travelers Insurance

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, the Travelers Insurance companies have dramatically expanded their involvement in educational programs for students at all grade levels, from prekindergarten through college. Throughout the 1970s, the Travelers educational programs focused exclusively on providing speakers for career awareness programs for high school students. Since that time, however, the company has committed extensive resources to expanding its involvement in public education. The career awareness and summer employment programs were supplemented with the Travelers Minority Actuarial Program, a 6-year work-study program for high school and college students interested in pursuing actuarial careers. The company also established a weekly tutoring program in which third through sixth graders were brought to the company's home office cafeteria for one-on-one study sessions with employees. Because of its concern over the high dropout rates among disadvantaged students, the Travelers developed its Children's Caravan Literacy Program. In the program, a recreational vehicle that has been transformed into a mobile classroom visits Hartford, Connecticut, elementary schools to provide multimedia instruction in literature, reading, and critical thinking. The company is also involved in developing a Hartford Early Learning Partnership (HELP) curriculum that includes the use of computers and hands-on activities to help children learn through structured play; a bilingual program has also been started. (MN)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

The Travelers Companies
One Tower Square
Hartford, CT 06183

ED293995

Ernest L. Osborne Presentation

'Innovative Programs to Meet Industry Workforce Needs'

to be delivered at

Section E of

Conference Board Conference

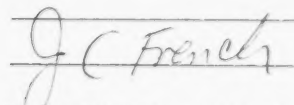
March 9, 1988

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY



TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

6186032
CE049819

Ernest L. Osborne Presentation
'Innovative Programs to Meet Industry Workforce Needs'
to be delivered at
Conference Board Conference
March 9, 1988

Thank you, Susan.

It is an honor to be part of this ongoing dialogue concerning the growing relationship between business and education. I know that our staff came back from last year's conference with lots of good ideas to apply to our programs in Hartford, so I'm pleased to be able to share with you my thoughts about our company's focus on education.

The Travelers Companies has a concerted interest in education that spans almost two decades.

Our support for and attention to education is addressed in two distinct ways. The first is through cash grants that are allocated by The Travelers Companies Foundation. These grants are made locally and nationally and include all levels of formal education. The second way we address education is through Hartford-based programs and projects that are managed by our company's professional staff. In some instances, our participation manifests itself through a combination of grants and staff-supported programs.

Throughout the years, Travelers' focus on education has broadened to meet the needs of the community it serves, and our company's business needs as well.

This afternoon, I'd like to share with you the philosophy behind and the anatomy of Travelers Youth Education Program.

First, I will discuss the origin and early development of the program. Then, I will cover the growth and changes it has experienced through the years. And finally I'll present today's Travelers Youth Education Program and its exciting new focus on programs and projects that involve young children as early as pre-kindergarten age.

There are two major reasons why our company is deeply involved in public education. And these reasons are quite clear and simple:

Number one is business-oriented. We need to develop a well-trained workforce of young people in order to meet future job demands of our industry and our nation.

The second reason is that we are concerned about the quality of life in our community. Obviously, education is a critical ingredient necessary to improve the quality of life -- especially in economic terms. Education is the cornerstone of the development of a healthy, vibrant community, and is necessary for our business and all other businesses to be profitable.

These are the reasons that drive Travelers to invest the high level of staff and financial resources that are necessary to create and maintain a program of this magnitude. For example, during the last seven years, Travelers has made grants totalling more than 3 million dollars to public education. That amount does not include the dollar value of the work of our professional staff.

Our involvement in education began in 1971, when Travelers created a partnership with Bulkeley High School in Hartford's South End.

Throughout the 1970s, our educational involvement focused exclusively on career awareness programs at this high school.

Working with faculty to connect Travelers employees with students, we supported career development programs for high school students. A speakers' bureau was established through which company employees visited classrooms and told students of various job responsibilities and requisite skills and training.

And it was during these years that the Travelers chapter of Toastmasters developed a public speaking program to help high school students sharpen their oral skills.

For the next nine years, our education program maintained the same focus without any major expansion. This was due to a number of complex reasons: first of all, there was a downturn in the U.S. and Connecticut economy; secondly, Travelers was experiencing departmental reorganization within the company; and third reason was that there were considerable leadership conflicts within the Hartford school system.

What is significant is that Travelers was able to maintain a thread of continuity and support for the existing programs in Bulkeley High School, and that we even created a new program at this time -- The Travelers Minority Actuarial Program, a six-year

work-study program for high school and college students interested in pursuing actuarial careers. This Minority Actuarial Program complemented the company's ongoing work-study and summer employment programs which focused on serving Hartford youth.

During the 1980s, The Travelers youth education staff and top management became dissatisfied with what we perceived as a lack of a 'comprehensiveness' in our approach to education -- up to this time, our efforts were concentrated solely on teenagers. Our staff, which was composed of former educators, social workers and public policy experts, felt we needed to broaden the focus of our approach to education to include younger children. We believed that early intervention in the school curriculum was critical to help Hartford's children get a better start on learning.

The first step we took to address this new initiative was to establish a weekly tutoring program in which 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th graders were brought into the company's home office cafeteria for one-on-one study sessions with employees.

It was at this time -- while Travelers was refocusing the direction of its own youth programs -- that the level of concern about the effectiveness of our education system was rising throughout our nation.

The 1983 report, A Nation at Risk, by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, called for stricter and higher academic standards, a greater amount of time spent on learning, and an enhanced role for teachers in the educational process.

Other papers, such as the Committee for Economic Development's Investing in Our Children, issued in 1985, indicated that many students lacked basic academic skills and a strong work ethic -- both of which are necessary for success in the world of work.

A 1986 report, Jobs for Connecticut's Future, documented the growing problem of an inadequately trained workforce in the state. It found that the most rapidly growing occupations in Connecticut would require strong thinking and interpersonal skills, along with basic academic skills. Yet it projected that there would not be enough employees with these skills to fill the number of available jobs in the year 2000.

The most recent reports on education have suggested that high drop-out rates among students, especially disadvantaged students, and low skill and motivation levels have roots in the the years of early education.

Many of these reports called upon businesses to become involved in efforts to improve the public schools and pressed for the development of community-wide private and public sector partnerships to effectively address growing educational concerns.

Travelers' growing awareness and experience in the field of education combined with the significant findings of these reports moved us to seek out innovative, new ways to address the educational needs of young students.

One project that we funded and helped to develop in Hartford was the 'Children's Caravan Literacy Program.' The Caravan -- actually a recreational vehicle that has been transformed into a mobile classroom -- visits Hartford elementary schools that feed into Bulkeley High School. Its activities provide a multi-media approach to literature that develops fourth graders' reading skills and helps them form critical thinking ability that transfers to other fields of study and work. The large, colorful Caravan is a combination theater, library and activities room on wheels, and is equipped with videos, film strips, a puppet theater, books and art supplies.

High school and college students work with the children, after receiving tutorial training in teaching and interpersonal communications. And the parents of the Caravan students are encouraged to participate in the program through workshops and rap sessions.

Incidentally, more information on the Children's Caravan and on our entire Youth Education Program is found in a booklet that we recently issued. Please take a copy as you leave this session later this afternoon.

Last September, in its document entitled, Children in Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged, the Committee for Economic Development said that more than one-third of all school-age children are at risk of meeting with educational failure.

Travelers was all too familiar with these grim figures. In 1986, one-quarter of Hartford's kindergarten children had to repeat that level because they did not have the cognitive, physical and emotional developmental skills required to enter first grade. The city's high poverty level was cited as a key factor.

Late last year, we seized an opportunity to try and help some of these children get off to a better start on learning. Travelers joined forces with the public schools and the University of Hartford to form the Hartford Early Learning Partnership, also known as HELP.

A special HELP curriculum is being developed that includes the use of computers and 'hands-on' activities to encourage children to learn by experimentation and structured play, as opposed to more traditional, formal forms of instruction. Two model classrooms -- one of them bilingual -- began operation last October. During the next few years, HELP kindergartens will be established in many of the city's elementary schools.

Travelers committed a half a million dollars to the HELP project. \$300,000 of that amount was used to establish an endowment at the University of Hartford for future early childhood education programs in the city. The creation of the endowment fund was a critical feature of the HELP program -- it signified that there is still much work to be done to improve the early years of learning for our children, and that Travelers wants to play an active role in that process.

This kind of partnership -- between a business and a university for the good of the public schools -- is indicative of The Travelers' new approach to funding institutions of higher learning. Until recently, Travelers, like many other companies, had supported higher education through direct contributions, employee matching gifts programs and scholarships. While we continue to sponsor those types of programs, the company is now actively looking for ways to creatively blend those dollars earmarked for higher learning with our efforts to support youth education programs in the public schools.

As you can see, over the last two decades, there has been considerable growth and change in Travelers' approach to supporting education. The roots of our efforts are in career awareness programs that help prepare high school students for jobs or entrance to college. But we have broadened our support, financially and staff-wise, to include programs that help elementary school children develop basic literacy skills -- skills that must be well-developed in order for students to enter institutions of higher learning or obtain jobs.

The new focus of our education initiative reflects the growing belief that in order to reduce drop-out rates and improve the basic skill level of our youth, efforts must begin in the early years of education, and that these early years must be seen as the key to later success.

Within Travelers itself, there has been a broadening of support for the youth education programs. At one time, these programs were managed solely by our National and Community Affairs staff, with support from The Travelers Companies Foundation. Today, our Corporate Personnel and Administration department is also actively involved and is responsible for a growing number of work-study, summer employment and career development programs on the high school and college levels. Personnel staff serve as consultants to the public schools on employment-related areas.

Now after listening to 18 years of history and transition, some of you in the audience may be thinking, "well, this is all well and good, and it sounds fine, but has Travelers involvement in youth education really made a difference in the lives of young people?"

To that I reply, "while we won't take all the credit for it, the reading and math test scores of students in the Hartford Public Schools have increased in recent years. The pupil drop-out rate in the city has decreased by 4 percent while enrollment has increased."

Hartford's Superintendent of Schools, Hernan LaFontaine, has publicly touted the success of The Travelers Computer Literacy Program, a half million dollar program that has helped provide computer hardware and computer literacy coursework for all of the high schools and middle schools in the city.

The superintendent also has used the relationship between the Hartford School System and The Travelers Companies as an exemplary model for successful collaboration between business and public education.

And what difference has our Youth Education Program made to The Travelers? There is no question that this program has been a success.

Many of our programs have provided Travelers with ready access to a growing pool of potential entry level employees.

Let me present several examples:

Our work-study programs have steadily grown through the years. Today, we have 81 youngsters in the program and expect that between 20 to 25 percent of them will join the company as permanent employees upon graduation in June.

In June, Travelers expects to hire 40 new high school graduates through a school-business partnership operated by the Hartford Chamber of Commerce.

And this year, we are looking forward to hiring the first graduates of Travelers' Minority Actuarial Program, the six-year work-study program that I mentioned earlier.

What are the long term benefits of our youth education initiative?

Every one of these youngsters -- every one who gets a better start in the early years of learning; every one who stays in school and gets a solid education; and everyone who gets the chance to discover a variety of career opportunities -- every one of these

youngsters is a person who will make it -- who will be self-sufficient and will pay his or her own way and will contribute to the economy of the community.

And that, I think, is the sum and substance of the American education system. Travelers is proud -- and grateful -- to play a part in that system in Hartford. Thank you.